1620, Lawrenceburg Com School Corp

PROJECT ABSTRACT

 The Lawrenceburg Community School Corporation has identified through data analysis of student performance and survey results that students in the district are not passing standardized tests at a high enough rate, nor are they being significantly engaged with content through the use of project based learning opportunities, performance assessments, or the integration of technology in their coursework. LCSC has decided to implement a three pronged approach to improving student achievement. This project will emphasize the integration of technology through the use of project based learning, performance assessments, and standards-based electronic portfolios.

The purpose of this focus is to more genuinely engage students in their own learning so that student achievement improves. Twenty-first century students have grown up with technological devices as a matter of course. The students of LCSC have not had access to technological devices in the classroom or been taught effectively to use technology as a tool for learning. The goal is to change that. Students deserve the opportunity to have high quality learning experiences which incorporate the skills and tools they will need to compete for, attain, and maintain jobs in a global economy.

In order to do that, students must be engaged in their own learning. One way to engage students is to utilize technology not only to pique their interest, but to provide a variety of methods for students to demonstrate what they know and are able to do as a result of their learning. The use of electronic portfolios is one way to address the goal of improving student achievement. Students will learn how to create an electronic portfolio, how to use other technological devices in order to input projects into their portfolios, how to assess the quality of their own work, and how to effectively present what they have learned.

Teachers must also learn how to design high quality projects and performance assessments for their students as well as how to create and access electronic portfolios. Professional development in those three areas will be the key to the successful implementation of this initiative. LCSC will partner with the Community School Corporation of Southern Hancock County in order to do this. CSCSHC has been involved with electronic portfolios since 2001 and with performance assessments and project based learning for the past 15 years. Their leadership for this initiative will be invaluable.

The electronic portfolio initiative will begin with teachers and administrators from CSCSHC working with teachers from LCSC to identify the expectations of an LHS graduate. Each expectation will be further defined by creating indicators for each. Once the basics for the portfolio have been created, CSCSHC staff will share their expertise in the areas of project based learning and performance assessments in order for LCSC teachers to begin developing high quality projects and assessments for their students. CSCSHC staff will continue to work with LCSC teachers as needed once the teachers begin working with students to insure a smooth implementation of the initiative.

NEEDS/BASELINE

Lawrenceburg Community School Corporation is spending a great deal of time collecting and analyzing data from 2008/09 in order to pinpoint areas of strengths and weaknesses across the district. This self assessment has shown all staff that while there are things that are going very well, there are still many areas in which improvement is needed. When drilling down into the data from standardized test scores, particularly ISTEP+ and Algebra 1 and 2, and English 11 End-of-Course Assessments, it was discovered that there is a gap in achievement between general education and special education students (average of 52% difference in language arts, 42% in math), students who receive free or reduced price lunch (16% difference in language arts, 19% in math) and those who do not. (Central Elementary School is in focused improvement due to the lack of progress made by students on free or reduced price lunch and the special education students.) The statistics for the Algebra 1 ECA showed that of the 176 students who took the test only 36 or 20% of them passed it. Algebra 2 ECA results were even worse ¿ only 4% of the 150 students ¿ passed. The English 11 ECA was better, but still only 57% of the high school students passed that assessment.

At the current time the LCSC has 41% of its students qualifying for free or reduced price lunch. (This is an increase from 33% at the end of the 2008/2009 school year.) With our increase in the numbers of students who qualify for free and reduced price lunch and special education, the district is researching ways to support student learning in order to help students improve academically.   Drilling down into the data from standardized test scores, particularly ISTEP+, Algebra 1 and 2, and English 11 End-of-Course Assessments, it was discovered that there is a gap in achievement between general education and special education students (average of 52% difference in language arts, 42% in math), students who receive free or reduced price lunch (16% difference in language arts, 19% in math) and those who do not. (Central Elementary School is in focused improvement due to the lack of progress made by students on free or reduced price lunch and the special education students.)

LCSC is working with the Indiana Student Achievement Institute to complete the self assessment of the district. In conjunction with looking at the testing data, each building has surveyed students and teachers along with parents and community members on a variety of topics. Survey results have shown that only 52% of students agree that they use a computer to help them learn at least once per week. Sixty-five percent of teachers agreed that they use a computer at least once a week as an instructional tool, leaving 31% who disagreed and 2% of the teachers didn't know! Another survey question asked students and teachers about the use of real world applications presented or used - 35% of the students agreed that their teachers did use real world applications that 52% of teachers agreed that they do use real world applications in their lessons, but 39% disagreed and another 9% didn't know if they did or not.

These three concerns dominate LCSC: low test scores for the two subgroups - free or reduced price lunch and special education throughout the district; lack of technology integration in classrooms; and lack of student engagement through real world applications. The increase in the integration of technology in the classrooms is a way to more thoroughly engage students with content as well as

provide them with real world applications that have been shown to further increase student achievement.

GOALS/OBJECTIVES

  LCSC has identified the following three goals:

1)   to promote student achievement in language arts and math through the integration of technology in the classroom on a regular basis;

2)   create and use effective performance based assessments in each classroom;

3)   Expand the use of project based learning across all disciplines; and

4)   to provide engaging, real world applications for students so they not only see the purpose for learning, but will be motivated to learn more.

Students today are very technologically savvy. They also love to interact with technology. They have grown up with cell phones, computers, the internet, etc. It only makes sense to capitalize on that interest to motivate them in the classroom. Thirty-one percent of teachers themselves reported in the Indiana Student Achievement Institute survey that they do not use a computer as an instructional tool at least once a week. While 65% stated that they did use the computer as an instructional tool at least once a week, that doesn¿t imply that the computer (or any technology for that matter) is being utilized much at all, let alone being an integral part of the lessons! It is evident that teachers need not only to be encouraged to integrate technology in their classrooms, but also need professional development in order to learn how to do so effectively. With so many of the student population unsuccessful with standardized tests, it is important that teachers use everything at their disposal (including technology) to increase student engagement with content and motivate students to learn.

Another survey question asked about the use of real world applications in assignments. Nearly half of the teachers responded that they do not regularly provide students with assignments focused on real world applications. Students deserve quality learning opportunities that provide a purpose for the learning that they can readily see as relevant to them and their lives. In order to give students the quality learning opportunities they deserve, teachers will need to create meaningful, real world applications such as projects and performance assessments in order to connect students to the world outside of school. Teachers must be supported in this effort through professional development that gives them the opportunity to learn about performance assessments, project based learning, how to develop quality projects and assessments, plus how to effectively evaluate them to insure that students have mastered the standards, skills, and/or content demonstrated.

The immediate goal of this project and partnership is to increase student achievement in language arts and math on the state mandated standardized tests so that 90% of all students tested will pass the assessments whether they take ISTEP+, GQE, or End of Course Assessments. LCSC also aims to: 1) provide students with opportunities to encourage reflection and self assessment; 2) provide multiple ways for students to show what they know and are able to do; 3) encourage teachers (particularly

English and math teachers) to integrate technology in their classrooms and lessons on a regular basis; and 4) provide teachers with the knowledge and tools to create meaningful and relevant applications within their lessons, assignments, and assessments. In that way students will be more motivated to complete assignments, retain more of the information, and be successful when assessed on what they have learned.

METHODS/ACTIVITIES

LCSC will implement the use of electronic portfolios beginning in the 2010/2011 school year. The intent is to eventually utilize electronic portfolios in all grade levels K-12, however the initiative will begin small ¿ one class or one grade level per building - and grow over time. Discussions focused on the expectations of an LCSC graduate have already begun throughout the district due to the work with the Indiana Student Achievement Institute. Once expectations have been identified, the next step is to develop indicators for each expectation (what evidence of learning is needed?) so all stakeholders ¿ teachers, students, parents, and community members ¿ will know when students have met each expectation. Criteria for what each portfolio would contain, how the portfolio would be evaluated, and who would be responsible for evaluating the portfolios must be created as well. This will be done with the support and leadership of the SHCCSC¿s management team.

Students will also need to learn about the purpose of the portfolio. The portfolios¿ main purpose is to improve student achievement in grades K-12, particularly in language arts and math, by providing students with quality standards-based projects and performance assessments, allowing students to use technology to complete their assessments, and showcasing their work through the presentation of their portfolios to a group of teachers, parents, and community members prior to matriculation from one school to another.

Initially students will learn how to create folders electronically to store their work. Teachers will be expected to maximize computer lab times to provide students with opportunities to not only work on assignments, but add projects to their portfolios. Students will then continually be encouraged to review their work, make judgments about the quality of their work, and decide whether a particular project should be included in the portfolio as an example of their very best effort.

Teachers will be expected, once they have received adequate professional development and time to not only integrate technology into their lessons, but to develop high quality projects for students that allow them to be more fully engaged with the topic/content. Examples of this might be for students to write a script and produce a video of Romeo and Juliet that is updated to the present day; create a podcast to teach a scene or an act from Shakespeare¿s Julius Caesar; study technology needs of the school and present a proposal of what is needed to the building level administrator complete with a needs assessment, budget, and teacher training necessary; elementary students may create sentence stretchers, puzzles or games focused on units of study.

Building and district level administrators will conduct observations and classroom walk- throughs to insure that teachers are integrating technology in their daily lessons and assignments. Students will be surveyed to note if there is an increase in the use of technology and real world applications in their coursework. Student achievement will also be monitored through the use of Wireless Generation, Acuity, Plato, ISTEP+, and ECA to evaluate the impact of technology integration through the use of projects, performance assessments, and the electronic portfolio on student achievement.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development for teachers will be a key element to the effective implementation of electronic portfolios. Teachers need to learn about project based learning as well as performance assessments and real world applications and be trained in the use of the technology needed for them to integrate the portfolio piece into their teaching practice. Types of technology might be the use of digital cameras, video cameras, scanners, creation of the folders for their students, creating podcasts, etc.

LCSC¿s partner school district, CSCSHC, will provide leadership and professional development by working closely with teachers on creating high quality projects, effective performance assessments, rubrics for evaluating the performance assessments and the electronic portfolios, while helping with technology implementation in classrooms. It is expected that the NPHS teachers and the management team will work with a small group of teachers initially and that eventually that cadre of individuals will in turn train their fellow LCSC teachers in what they have learned about project based learning, performance assessments, and electronic portfolios. In the same way students will eventually mentor younger students in how to create their portfolios, what types of evidence for each expectation they should consider including in their portfolios, and help them prepare for the presentation of their portfolios.

Once teachers have received the training and professional development needed, they will work with students to create folders in which to store their work as well as the use of any other technology that they will be expected to use. There will be the expectation from the district level that teachers will integrate the use of technology regularly in their lessons as evidenced in lesson plans, projects assigned, and observations. Teachers should then set similar expectations for students to integrate the use of technology to complete their assignments, projects, and assessments.

Beginning in March 2010 an overview of the use of electronic portfolios presented by NPHS staff to LCSC teachers, equipment needed to successfully implement the use of electronic portfolios will be identified and purchased. During April/May a group of teachers will be identified to pilot the implementation of project based learning, performance assessments, and electronic portfolios and professional development for the cadre of teachers will begin in June so that teachers have a good grasp of project based learning, performance assessments as well as the creation of the electronic portfolios. Initial implementation with pilot group will begin in August/September 2010. Throughout the year reflection will be encouraged on the part of teachers and students to evaluate and inform the process so that needed changes can be effected during the implementation year and into the second year.

FORMATIVE/SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

Improving student achievement K-12 is the goal of the implementation of project based learning, performance assessments, and electronic portfolios. To that end, the process will be continuously evaluated through ongoing discussions between teachers as reported in their grade level and/or department meeting minutes, principals reporting on the increasing use of technology in their respective buildings based upon observations, student and teacher surveys reflecting an increase in the use of technology within their classrooms as well as their assignments, parent and community member surveys reflect an increase in use of technology in classrooms, and improved student achievement as seen on report cards, Wireless Generation monitoring (K-2), Waterford assessments (K-2), Acuity assessments (3-8), Plato assessments (K-12), ISTEP+ results, GQE results, and ECA results.   (The Wireless Generation, Acuity, and Plato allow for monitoring of student achievement throughout the school year providing data to be used as part of a formative assessment of the initiative.) Based upon the data from the abovementioned sources, the program will be adjusted as needed in order to better meet student needs or address issues identified so the implementation goes as smoothly as possible and that it will be maintained efficiently and effectively.

The district¿s summative evaluation of this initiative centers on the standardized test scores along with any requirements from the Indiana Department of Education. The initiative will be deemed successful 1) when students¿ ISTEP, GQE and ECA test scores improve; 2) when teachers are surveyed a larger percentage of them will report that technology is being utilized more regularly, but is actually embedded within the lessons and assessments assigned to students; and 3) when students and teachers report that from their perspective, technology is an instructional tool that is vital to their learning.

LOCAL MATCH

$73,500

In order to make a K-12 technology initiative such as electronic portfolios a reality, the district must commit to a technology play that allows for expansion of the number of computer labs to which students will be able to access throughout the school day for coursework. Currently funds ($65,000) have been allocated to purchase a wireless lab for two of the district¿s schools so that each building will then have 3 computer labs each. This will help as students begin utilizing the labs more to work on their electronic portfolios and/or projects in which they need internet access.   Since bandwidth has already become an issue, the district is in the process of researching whether to add an additional T1 line or to go with fiber. The minimum cost for this would be approximately $8500, but could be significantly higher if fiber is the best option. Therefore the minimum total amount for the district¿s matching funds will be $73,500.

PARTNERSHIPS

  The Community School Corporation of Southern Hancock County will partner with Lawrenceburg Community School Corporation on the electronic portfolio project. CSCSHC has been utilizing electronic portfolios since 2001 at New Palestine High School. Through the work of several teachers and administrators the electronic portfolios have come to mean a great deal to students, parents, teachers, and community members alike.   Seniors at NPHS present their portfolios to a group of teachers, parents, and community members allowing them to showcase their learning over their high school careers. Students gain poise, respect for learning, knowledge in effective use of technology and its integration in their coursework, and most of all, pride in their work, and what they have accomplished as high school students.

CSCSHC also focuses on performance assessments in all subject areas to create a standards based portfolio that concretely links student tasks and performance with the standards they demonstrate. For example, when a group of teachers from LCSC visited NPHS, two senior students presented their portfolios. One student shared pictures from a class in which he worked on building a house. He talked at length about his part in the construction. Another student sang in Latin. Both students presented writing pieces as well as other projects they had completed over the course of their high school careers. From their presentations it was easy to see they had mastered standards in a variety of subject areas and in a variety of ways. They each were able then to capitalize on their own learning styles and talents to present their learning in their own unique ways. Teachers and administrators from NPHS will share their knowledge of successfully implementing project based learning and performance assessments with the teachers of the Lawrenceburg Community School Corporation. Projects and performance assessments have been shown to be an effective method for increasing student engagement with content. When students are engaged, they typically interact with the content for longer periods of time and tend to remember more of the content over time. This can reasonably be expected to increase student achievement.

Using the electronic portfolios to showcase student work based upon the standards and that meets assessment rubrics, allows an individual student to be as creative as they would like to be as well as demonstrating what they know and are able to do as a result of their coursework. With the structure of the school day, pressure to cover all of the Indiana State Academic Standards, and numbers of students in classes, it is often difficult for teachers at middle and high school especially to form genuine caring relationships with students. Research has shown that students who believe there is an adult at school who cares about them can and often does motivate students to work harder and make significant strides in improving their academic achievement. The electronic portfolios often provide an opportunity for teachers to learn more about their students ¿ particularly their interests and their talents. This could be viewed as an added benefit of effectively using electronic portfolios.

LCSC looks forward to the opportunity to working closely with CSCSHC to improve student achievement through the effective implementation and use of project based learning, performance assessments, and electronic portfolios.